Land Access and Opportunity Board: Shelter for All

March 5th, 2026 12:00PM-1:00PM

Meeting Facilitator: Kiah Morris

Notetaker: Arealles Ortiz

Attendance:
Jaada Longmore, VRJA
Brian Cina, National Association of Social Workers
Mary Gerisch, NAACP
Zack Hughes, Vermont Psychiatric Survivors

Guests: Grey Berreda

Not Present:

Mark Hughes, VRJA

Susan Aranoff, Vermont DDC

Sonali Samarasinghe, US Committee for Refugees and Immigrants

Agenda:

- Check in: What's your favorite aspect of Spring?
- Draft Minutes Review: 12/19/25, 1/9/26, 1/29/26, 2/5/26, 2/11/26
- Staff report back on the urgent need for funding support that was sent for consideration.
- Determine whether this committee continues or shift focus to Housing for All?
- Update on TRC on truth telling sessions for the unhousing community.
- Public Comment

Minutes:

Draft Minutes Review: 12/19/25, 1/9/26, 1/29/26, 2/5/26, 2/11/26

Zach Hughes makes a motion to approve minutes as presented

Brian Cina seconds that motion

All in favor

Staff report back on the urgent need for funding support that was sent for consideration.

It has been approved; we don't have a date as to when it will be paid out. We will keep working on how to best create processes as these requests keep coming through.

Determine whether this committee continues or shifts focus to Housing for All discussion:

Comment: It would be beneficial if our work was something different than existing committees' work.

Comment: We need to move away from the mandating that we're doing and the enabling of the current systems that are dealing with emergent shelter needs. How do we support the autonomy of people who want to live a nomadic life and support people falling through the system who are not getting the support they need to get secure housing?

Comment: Heard about people not having resources they need to become securely housed. That varies so much in each location in Vermont. We have a group called Community Solutions that comes together to share resources with community partners.

Comment: Over the years, providers have become comfortable with hotel rooms. In doing that, we have lost opportunity to do other things. Not saying go without hotel rooms but create other options.

Comment: In addition to grant programs, what if there was a fusion of the resilience hub concept with housing? What if there was specific investment in coop owned housing for people who are unhoused and others? That could be a way for people to buy in and collective ownership.

Comment: If every region in the state had a welcome center or community campfire, if things fall apart, you can go there for peer support.

Action Step: Create a base outline proposal that includes our launching grants and programming with staff to outline what this committee can work on together with a Housing First approach.

Comment: I like the idea of setting measurable goals of the programs. It would be great to see how these programs plan to help with the housing crisis, such as manifesting some of these ideas.

Update on TRC on truth telling sessions for the unhousing community:

We are in conversation with the Truth and Reconciliation Commission around wanting to host Truth Telling sessions for the unhoused community. We are meeting with them tomorrow.

Public Comment:

I was excited about this meeting because it means so much. The LAOB centers our voice. We experience a lot of erasure on the streets. We carry a lot of symptoms of societies dysfunctions. We have been blamed for a lot of things other people in the community have done. LAOB ripples throughout the community that we are heard. The first step is to bring our voice into the conversation.

We are working on a space to grieve the SSP, a needle exchange. It was a wonderful place.

Response to Public Comment:

Thank you for all that. We appreciate you being here.

What's the SSP acronym? The needle exchange. Sorry that community resources are closing. We are seeing a shift away from existing structure to new high threshold access to care. Wanted to add we are losing something and going to new mechanisms that cause further harm. Thank you for not giving up on the board.

Meeting Adjourned at 1:00PM

Action Step:

-Create a base outline proposal with our current grants and programming with staff to outline what this committee can work on together with a Housing First approach

-S.193, Forensic Facility Bill, ask Susan if she would like to present this topic to the group? Solutions Focused.

Submitted By: Arealles Ortiz